

# Hot Jobs for the 21st Century

Between 1998 and 2008, U.S. employment will rise to 160.8 million from 140.5 million. This represents an increase of 14 percent, or 20.3 million jobs. Many of these new job opportunities will benefit persons seeking employment in computer and health related occupations, social services, legal, natural science, teaching, and financial areas.

## **Women's Labor Force**

Women have a huge stake in the current and future job market. Between 1998 and 2008, women's participation in the labor force is expected to increase by 15 percent, while men will only see an increase of about 10 percent. As a result, women will increase their share of the labor force from 46 to 48 percent. The fastest labor force increase will be among Hispanic origin and Asian and other women, 48.8 and 45.7 percent, respectively. Black women will increase their participation by 21.1 percent and white women by 12.6 percent.

## **Growing Occupations**

There are two perspectives when viewing growth occupations—1) those with the largest job growth; and 2) those with the fastest growth. Largest job growth refers to the total number of jobs created within an occupation over a specific period of time, while fastest job growth refers to the percentage change in employment within a particular occupation over a specific period of time. One fact to remember—the fast growing occupations account for less than 20 percent of the projected overall growth in employment between 1998 and 2008. The employment size of an occupation during the base year of comparison has much to do with the growth of the occupation.

## **Major Occupational Groups**

Employment in professional specialty occupations will increase the fastest (27 percent) and add the most jobs (5.3 million) between 1998 and 2008. Much of this growth is expected to be found among teachers, computer, mathematical and operations research occupations, and health assessment and treating occupations. The group with the second fastest growth rate (22.2 percent) is technicians and related support occupations—with 1 million new jobs. More than half of this projected job growth is expected among health technicians and technologists.

Employment in service occupations is projected to increase by 17.1 percent or 3.9 million jobs. More than half of these newly created jobs will be found in public education, state and local government, hospitals, and health services. Other services sector jobs with substantial projected growth are food preparation, personal services, protective service, and cleaning and building services. The number of self-employed service workers is also expected to increase by 222,000 jobs, with large gains in the cleaning and building services occupations and child care workers.

The number of executive, administrative, and managerial (EXAM) workers is projected to increase by 16.4 percent, or 2.4 million jobs. Most of these jobs will be found in various segments of the services sector—public education, hospitals, finance, insurance, real estate, wholesale and retail trade, transportation and public utilities. The number of self-employed EXAM workers is expected to increase by 361,000—many of these workers run their own businesses or are self-employed consultants.

*Source: Women's Bureau, U.S. Department of Labor*

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Computer and health-related occupations dominate the list of fast-growing occupations. These two occupational groups also represent some of the higher-paying, faster-growing occupations.

Computer-related occupations (computer engineers, systems analysts, database administrators, data processing equipment repairers) will grow at a very fast rate in the coming years because of the continuing advances in computer technology. The expanding need for new computer applications for the World Wide Web, scientific research, productivity gains, and demand for cost reductions will fuel the need for computer engineers/programmers, systems analysts, and computer and data processing repairers. The computer field tends to require more education and offer higher earnings than health services, where a number of the fast-growing occupations have lower than median earnings.

Health care occupations will continue to grow rapidly because of a large aging population that will require more health care, a wealthier population that can afford better health care, and the advent of new advances in medical technology. Many of these occupations are technicians and assistants, such as medical assistants, medical records and health information technicians, physical therapy assistants and aides, and dental assistants.

### **Occupations with the Largest Job Growth**

Most occupations with the largest projected job growth are concentrated in four industry sectors—retail trade, business services, health services, and public and private education. They will account for more than three-fifths of total job growth from 1998 to 2008.

Many occupations have average or less than average growth rates while still providing more job openings than some fast growing occupations strictly because of their large size. Some examples of these occupations are retail salespersons, general managers and top executives, cashiers, general office clerks, and truck drivers.

### **Educational Requirements**

Occupations requiring an associate degree or higher level of education accounted for one-fourth of all jobs in 1998 and will account for 40 percent of total job growth between 1998 and 2008. Those requiring no education and training beyond high school, except for on-the-job training, will account for 57 percent.

Occupations requiring a bachelor's degree or more education are concentrated in the professional specialty group. The 1999 median weekly earnings figure for full-time wage and salary workers employed in professional specialty occupations was \$800 (both sexes). Examples of fast-growing, high-paying jobs in this category include: computer engineers, systems analysts, database administrators, physician assistants, residential counselors, social workers, biological scientists, and occupational therapists. Examples of large growth occupations in this category are systems analysts, computer engineers, elementary and secondary school teachers, social workers, college and university faculty, and computer programmers.

Examples of high-paying growth occupations that may not require a bachelor's degree but do require post-secondary education or training are: computer support specialists, desktop publishing specialists, paralegals, medical records/health information technicians, physical and occupational therapy assistants, respiratory therapists, dental hygienists, cardiovascular technologist and technicians, and correctional officers. (It is important to realize that employers may favor applicants with more education or training than is minimally required.)

Growth occupations that do not require post-secondary education generally do not offer the higher than median earnings associated with the above-mentioned jobs. Many of these jobs require short-term on-the-job training in which the worker can usually learn their skills in less than a year. They include: home health aides, bill and account collectors, retail salespersons, cashiers, truck drivers, teacher assistants, janitors and cleaners, nursing aides, orderlies, waiters and waitresses, guards, food counter workers, child care workers, and laborers. None of these occupations had median weekly earnings higher than the average (\$549) for all workers in 1999.